



centre on
social movement
studies

2026 COSMOS SUMMER SCHOOL: Understanding contentious politics. Theory and practice of social movement research

Organising committee:

Lorenzo Bosi, Donatella della Porta, Chiara Milan, Martín Portos and Lorenzo Zamponi
(Scuola Normale Superiore)

Organisational support:

Maria Chiara Franceschelli and Giuseppe Cugnata (Scuola Normale Superiore)

Financial support:

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May 11-15 2026
SCUOLA NORMALE SUPERIORE

Palazzone di Cortona
Cortona (AR)
Italy

HANDBOOK

Sunday, May 10th
19:00-21:30

Welcome Aperitivo at Palazzone

Monday, May 11th

8.30 – 9.00

Registration

9:00-11:00

Keynote Speech: Rethinking social movements in intense times

Donatella della Porta (Scuola Normale Superiore)

11:00-11.30

Coffee break

11.30-13.00

Paper presentations and discussions

Vural Kaptan. *Visualizing the “Enemy Within”: Panic Entrepreneurs and the Aesthetics of Civil Society Capture in Poland and Israel.*

Discussants: Zo Bilay, Donatella della Porta

Pau Orihuela Sánchez. *At the Limits of Development: A Meso-Level Analysis of Ecoterritorial Contention in the Canary Islands (2021–2025).*

Discussants: Lavinia Bagnai, Donatella della Porta

13:00-14:00

Lunch break

14:00-16:00

Keynote Speech: Studying Power in the Past, Present, and Future.

Rory McVeigh (University of Notre Dame)

16:00-16.30

Coffee break

16.30-18.00

Paper presentations and discussions

Michelle Tse. *The Transnational Diffusion of Right-Wing Populism: A Comparative Analysis of MAGA-Inspired Repertoires in Japan and South Korea.*

Discussants: Vural Kaptan, Rory McVeigh

Nicolás Izquierdo. *Contentious Mobilization and Legislative Responsiveness: Evidence from the U.S. Labor Movement.*

Discussants: Andrea Delbono, Rory McVeigh

Zo Bilay. *Warriors for race and religion: monk-led militias, TikTok, and violence following the 2021 Myanmar military coup*

Discussant: Michelle Tse, Rory McVeigh

Tuesday, May 12th

9:00-11:00

Theory: Processes of collective action

Lorenzo Bosi (Scuola Normale Superiore)

11:00-11.30

Coffee break

11.30-13.00

Paper presentations and discussions

Miriam Maci. *State legitimacy reorganization in post-war Rojava.*

Discussants: Marta Kołodziej, Lorenzo Bosi

Martha Ogochukwu Dennis. *Moral duty to protest and its role in shaping protest behaviour.*

Discussants: Silvia Protino, Giuseppe Cugnata

13:00-14:00

Lunch break

14:00-16:00

Methods: Interviewing activists

Lorenzo Bosi (Scuola Normale Superiore)

16:00-16.30

Coffee break

16.30-18.30

Paper presentations and discussions

Andrea Delbono. *Tick-Tock, Boom. A Theoretical and Methodological Approach to Understand the Political Impact of Collective Action in Socio-environmental Mining Conflicts: Insights from South America.*

Discussants: Farzad Ghotaslou, Lorenzo Bosi

Amber Wright. *Resistance as solidarity and empowerment: how the drug trade in Colombia influenced gendered experiences of violence.*

Discussants: Katie Flaming, Lorenzo Bosi

Wednesday, May 13th

9:00-11:00

Theory: Collective behaviour and political participation

Martín Portos (Scuola Normale Superiore)

11:00-11.30

Coffee break

11.30-13.00

Paper presentations and discussions

Maela Guillaume-Le Gall. *From the Streets to the Ballot Box. The Local Electoral Effects of Yellow Vest and 2023 Riots in France.*

Discussants: Ugo Laquière, Giuseppe Cugnata

Nicole Angel. *Operationalizing Intersectional Mobilization: A Multi-Dimensional Framework for Large-N Comparative Research.*

Discussants: Nicolás Izquierdo, Martín Portos

13:00-14:00

Lunch break

14:00-16:00

Methods: Protests events and (protest) surveys

Martín Portos (Scuola Normale Superiore)

16:00-16.30

Coffee break

16.30-18.00

Paper presentations and discussions

Jessica Walker. *Achievement through Adaptation: Tactical Flexibility in Contentious Politics.*

Discussants: Sadeen Haddad, Martín Portos

Marta Kołodziej. *Prefigurative politics in contemporary protest action.*

Discussants: Miriam Maci, Martín Portos

Thursday, May 14th

9:00-11:00

Theory: Culture, discourse, narratives

Lorenzo Zamponi (Scuola Normale Superiore)

11:00-11.30

Coffee break

11.30-13.00

Paper presentations and discussions

Ugo Laquière. *How to Protect Children? Competing Anti-Gender Politics within Anti-Covid Activism in Southeastern France.*

Discussants: Maela Guillaume-Le Gall, Lorenzo Zamponi

Adam Quinn. *The effect of war on repertoires on contention in Russia. A thematic analysis of Telegram channels.*

Discussants: Hamid Khalafallah, Maria Chiara Franceschelli

13:00-14:00

Lunch break

14:00-16:00

Methods: Discourse and frame analysis

Lorenzo Zamponi (Scuola Normale Superiore)

16:00-16.30

Coffee break

16.30-18.00

Paper presentations and discussions

Katie Fleming. *Meaning-Making through Memory Creation in Galicia: How Grassroots Organizations Navigate the Present via the Past.*

Discussants: Amber Wright, Lorenzo Zamponi

Silvia Protino. *Youth-Led Feminist Movements and Institutionalization: Negotiating Participation and Risk-Opportunity Dynamics.*

Discussants: Nicole Angel, Lorenzo Zamponi.

20:00

SUMMER SCHOOL DINNER (Place TBA, will be announced during the School)

Friday, May 15th

9:00-11:00

Theory: Collective identity and emotions in social movements

Chiara Milan (Scuola Normale Superiore)

11:00-11.30

Coffee break

11.30-13.00

Paper presentations and discussions

Sadeen Haddad. *Social mobilisation: transformations and continuities.*

Discussants: Jessica Walker, Chiara Milan

Farzad Ghotaslou. *Navigating Visibility in Diasporic Political Mobilization.*

Discussants: Martha Ogochukwu Dennis, Maria Chiara Franceschelli,

13:00-14:00

Lunch break

14:00-16:00

Methods: Participant observation and ethnographic methods

Chiara Milan (Scuola Normale Superiore)

16:00-16.30

Coffee break

16.30-18.00

Paper presentations and discussions

Lavinia Bagnai. *Building alliances and reconstructing identities – the case of students' protests in Serbia.*

Discussants: Pau Orihuela Sánchez, Chiara Milan

Hamid Khalafallah. *Contention Under Constraint. The Emergence of Grassroot Mobilisation in Authoritarian Sudan.*

Discussants: Adam Quinn, Chiara Milan

CLASSES AND MATERIALS

Monday, May 11th

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Rethinking social movements in intense times

DONATELLA DELLA PORTA

How do social movements operate in moments of extraordinary political and social upheaval? This article develops the concept of “time intensification” to analyze contentious politics during periods when traditional structural constraints weaken, and collective agency becomes particularly significant. Drawing on research from democratization processes to contemporary global protest waves, the analysis identifies two key processes: the fluidization of structures, where established patterns break down through relational ruptures and emotional outrage, and the densification of relations, marked by emerging networks and expanding possibilities. While social movement studies have traditionally focused on “quiet times,” this theoretical framework helps explain mobilization during critical junctures when predictability shrinks and decisions must be made rapidly under uncertain conditions. The article shows how bridging traditional social movement theories with new approaches can illuminate contemporary contentious politics in increasingly turbulent contexts.

Readings

della Porta, D. (2025). Rethinking Social Movements in Intense Times. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 30(1), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.17813/1086-671X-30-1-1>

Bio

Donatella della Porta is Professor of Political Science and Director of the PhD program in Political Science and Sociology at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Florence, where she leads the Center on Social Movement Studies (COSMOS). Internationally recognized for her research on social movements, political violence, and democratisation, she has authored or edited over 100 books, including *Social Movements: An Introduction* (2020) and *Contentious Politics in Emergency Critical Junctures* (CUP, 2022). A recipient of numerous prestigious accolades, she was awarded the Alexander von Humboldt Stiftung Research Award (2021) and the John D. McCarthy Award for Lifetime Achievement (2024). She is an International Honorary Member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and a member of the Accademia dei Lincei.



Monday, May 11th

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Studying Power in the Past, Present, and Future

RORY MCVEIGH

Drawing on his past work studying the rise of the Ku Klux Klan in the United States and the more recent support for the rise in support for Donald Trump, Notre Dame sociologist Rory McVeigh will illustrate the importance of understanding power dynamics when studying social movements of the past and present. The talk will also address the importance of forging a tight link between theory and data and theorizing in a way that offers predictive power rather than post hoc interpretations of the underlying causes of collective action. McVeigh places power devaluation theory at the center of the talk, which provides clear guidance for those seeking to identify the conditions that provoke right-wing social movements and conservative politics more generally.

Readings

McVeigh, R. (2023) Reflections on studying right-wing extremism in the twenty-first century. *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 28(4):509-514 DOI 10.17813/1086-671X-28-4-509

Bio



Rory McVeigh is the Nance Reeves Dreux Professor of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame. He directs the Center for the Study of Social Movements, and his research and teaching interests include inequality, politics, and social movements. He recently published *The Politics of Losing: Trump, the Klan, and the Mainstreaming of Resentment* (with Kevin Estep) (Columbia University Press, 2019) and *Politics and Privilege: How Status Wars Sustain Inequality* (with William Carbonaro, Chang Liu, and Kenadi Silcox) (Columbia University Press, 2025).

Tuesday, May 12th

LECTURES

Theory: Processes of collective action Methods: Interviewing activists

LORENZO BOSI

How do we capture the dynamic nature of collective action? These lectures offer a theoretical and methodological toolkit for advancing processual research. Moving beyond a standard theoretical survey, this lecture serves as a practical toolkit for designing nuanced research on collective action processes. Through a synthesis of theoretical concepts, methodological tools and empirical case studies, the session charts a way forward for processual perspectives.

Readings

Theory: Processes of collective action

Bosi and Malthaner. 2024 "Continuities and Transformations in Processes of Collective Action", in *Società Mutamento Politica*

Bosi and Zamponi. 2020. "Paths toward the Same Form of Collective Action: Direct Social Action in Times of Crisis in Italy" *Social Forces* 99 (2): 847-869.

Methods: Interviewing activists

Bosi. 2021 "Life-history interviews" in Marco Giugni and Maria Grasso (eds.) *Oxford Handbook of Political Participation* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 284-297.

Bosi. 2018 "Contextualizing the biographical outcomes of Provisional IRA former activists: a structure-agency dynamic." in Olivier Fillieule and Erik Neveu (eds.) *Activists Forever? The Long-Term Impacts of Political Activism in Various Contexts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 202-220.

Bio



Lorenzo Bosi is a political sociologist doing comparative analysis in the cross-disciplinary fields of social movements, political violence, and political participation. His academic research is based on the premise that political participation phenomena are dynamic. For this reason, his theoretical, empirical, and methodological research of the last twenty years has mainly sought to understand how and when collective actors and activist trajectories unfold over time and how they contribute to social change. This has translated into a large body of empirical research on Northern Ireland and Italy.

Wednesday, May 13th

LECTURES

Theory: Collective behaviour and political participation Methods: Protests events and (protest) surveys

MARTÍN PORTOS

This session examines political behaviour with a focus on non-electoral forms of participation and the role of citizens as political actors. It explores the main theories of political engagement, including the civic voluntarism model, cognitive mobilization, general incentives, modernization theories, social capital and institutional accounts. Empirically, the session introduces key methods used to study protest and political participation, particularly surveys and protest event analysis (PEA). Surveys capture individual participation by asking respondents about their involvement in specific actions over a given time period. In contrast, PEA tracks the longitudinal occurrence, size, and characteristics of protest events, as well as the responses of relevant actors. The session discusses the types of research questions these methods address, alongside their main advantages, limitations, and methodological challenges.

Readings:

Anduiza, E., & Tormos, R. (2022). "Survey data and methods for the study of political participation". In M. Giugni & M. Grasso (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Participation*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198861126.013.14>.

Brady, H. E., Verba, S., & Schlozman, K. L. (1995). Beyond SES: A Resource Model of Political Participation. *American Political Science Review*, 89(2), 271–294. doi: 10.2307/2082425.

Fisher, D. R., et al. (2019). The science of contemporary street protest: New efforts in the United States. *Science Advances* 5: eaaw5461. DOI: 10.1126/sciadv.aaw5461.

Giugni, M., & Grasso, M. (2022). "The Study of Political Participation Across Research Traditions". In M. Giugni & M. Grasso (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Political Participation*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198861126.013.1>.

van Deth, J. (2014). A conceptual map of political participation. *Acta Politica* 49, 349–367.

Bio



Martín Portos is Senior Assistant Professor at the Scuola Normale Superiore (Florence, Italy) and a faculty member of COSMOS. After writing an award-winning PhD dissertation at the European University Institute, he was CONEX-Plus Marie Curie Fellow and Ramón y Cajal Professor at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain. He has published three monographs and numerous articles in scientific journals (e.g., *European Societies*; *Government & Opposition*; *Information, Communication & Society*; *Journal of European Public Policy*; *Social Forces*; *Sociology*; *West European Politics*) on social movements, political participation, and social inequalities.

Thursday, May 14th

LECTURES

Theory: Culture, discourse, narratives Methods: Frame and Discourse Analysis

LORENZO ZAMPONI

Collective action takes place in a culturally structured environment. Actors' perceptions and behaviours are partially shaped by memories of the past, socially shared understandings of reality, habitus, expectations, linguistic and cognitive mechanisms, and so on. This session will analyse these issues, addressing the different cultural approaches to the study of collective action and providing both readings that draw on this multidisciplinary tradition and examples rooted in contemporary collective action. From the methodological point of view, the session will focus on the analysis of texts aimed at investigating the meaning participants give to their action, addressing in particular discourse analysis and frame analysis, and pointing out both the methodological and epistemological implications of the different approaches and suggestions for their practical implementation.

Readings:

Gamson, W. (1988) Political Discourse and Collective Action. In: B. Klandermans, B., Kriesi H. and Tarrow S. (eds.) *From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research Across Cultures, International Social Movement Research*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, pp. 219-244.

Lindekilde, L. (2014) Discourse and Frame Analysis: In-depth Analysis of Qualitative Data in Social Movement Studies. In: D. della Porta (ed.) *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 195-228.

Oliver, P. and Johnston, H. (2000) What a Good Idea! Ideologies and Frames in Social Movement Research. *Mobilization* 5(1): 37-54.

Polletta, F. (1998) Contending Stories: Narrative in Social Movements. *Qualitative Sociology* 21, pp.419-446

Snow, D.A., Vliegenthart, R. and Ketelaars P. (2019) The Framing Perspective on Social Movements: Its Conceptual Roots and Architecture. In: Snow, D.A., Kriesi, H., Soule, S.A. and McCammon, H.J. (eds) *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*. London: Wiley-Blackwell, pp. 392-410.



Bio

Lorenzo Zamponi is an associate professor of sociology at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Florence, where he is part of the Centre on Social Movement Studies (COSMOS). His research interests include memory, contentious politics and media analysis. He is author of monographs, peer-reviewed articles in international journals and book chapters, focusing on the nexus between contentious politics, culture, and social change.

Friday, May 15th

LECTURES

Theory: Collective identity and emotions in social movements
Methods: Participant observation and ethnographic methods

CHIARA MILAN

How is collective identity constructed, maintained, and contested? Which role does emotions play in social mobilization? This class will explore identity dilemmas and boundary-making processes in social movements, with a particular emphasis on the role of emotions and how they influence participation and protest dynamics. Empirically, it will delve into participant observation and ethnographic methods as key tools to explore social interactions and mobilization patterns, engaging with ethical challenges, positionality, and power dynamics concerning research in contentious and high-risk settings.

Readings

Jasper J. (2011) "Emotions and social movements: Twenty years of theory and research" *Annual Review of Sociology* 37: 285–303

Polletta, F., & Jasper, J. M. (2001). Collective identity and social movements. *Annual review of Sociology*, 27(1), 283-305

Balsiger, P., & Lambelet, A. (2014). Participant observation. *Methodological practices in social movement research*, 144-172.

Blee K. M. (1998) *White-Knuckle Research: Emotional Dynamics in Fieldwork with Racist Activists* *Qualitative Sociology* 21 (4): 381-399

Bio



Chiara Milan is Senior Assistant Professor in Political Sciences in the Department of Political and Social Sciences at the Scuola Normale Superiore, Italy. She served as project coordinator of the Jean Monnet Network "Transnational Political Contention in Europe" (TraPoCo) between 2021 and 2024. She was previously a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the Centre for Southeast European Studies of the University of Graz, Austria, and holds a Ph.D. in Political and Social Sciences from the European University Institute. Her research focuses on social movements and contentious politics, nationalism, ethnicity, citizenship and migration, with a specific focus on Southeastern Europe. She is the author of the monograph *Social mobilization beyond ethnicity* (2020, Routledge), she co-edited the book *Contentious Politics in the Transnational arena* (2024), and is among the authors of the book *Resisting the Backlash: Street Protest in Italy* (Routledge, 2022).